

Mr. HAMMERSLEY opposed the measure, principally on account of the dishonourable means by which these specimens of ancient art had been acquired; his feelings had long been interested on this subject, and he would not weaken the ground of his opposition by adverting at much length to any other. As to the price of the collection, perhaps it was not too much; he certainly had seen it, but he was not so much enamoured of these headless ladies as to forget another—Justice. He thought it by no means impossible that the injury now done might be the cause of future dissension, for it was clear from the evidence before the committee, that even the authority granted to Lord Elgin was by no means of so extensive a nature as had been pretended; a very slight knowledge of Italian would acquaint a reader, that *quelche* (the word used in the authority granted) meant some and not any. If at any time Greece should recover her rank among the states of Europe, what would be her feelings against that nation which had stripped her temples and altars of all the relics of their glory, and this by the hand of the representatives of the sovereign himself! Then again, as to the assertion that the Greeks themselves set no value on these objects, the whole evidence before the committee contradicted it; Lord Elgin himself enumerated among his expenses 5gn. a-day for the admission of his artists to draw and take models. The evidence of the hon. Member for Northallerton proved that the Turks themselves set a high value on these remains; and that they were never destroyed but by the unavoidable operation of time or accident. But whether the inhabitants set a value on them or not, made no difference with respect to the mode by which they were acquired; this was in the highest degree dishonourable. Lord Elgin stated, “that the Turkish government, in return for the services afforded them in Egypt, were willing to do any thing towards forwarding his intentions, and that he had pressed the co operation in Egypt with the main view of facilitating an acquisition of these works of art.” So then, continued the hon. gentleman, a British ambassador could thus take advantage of the feelings of a grateful people, and could urge service to be done, with the express view of pillaging them of all the remains of their glory! The Earl of Aberdeen stated his opinion that a private individual could not have taken away these marbles, and Dr. Hunt's evidence showed that presents were given to the wayvode for a favourable interpretation of the firman. So much for the evidence. He should now advert to the difficulty of thinking of paying this money, at a time when the table was covered with petitions complaining of distress from every part of the empire. It had been urged some other power would make the purchase, if we neglected it; he believed, however, that this would be true, not on account of any value set on the collection, but with a desire to possess a proof that a nation which held itself out as a paragon of honour in all its transactions had been guilty of a robbery, one most undisguised and inexcusable.

He would say, then, as a father to his infant, restore these stolen goods to the place where they were taken. Government had been extremely negligent in not restraining the noble earl from his work of spoliation, which was a stain on the character of the country; he wished it to be wiped out with the last shilling we possessed, and he trusted the house would not place in the British Museum a monument of our eternal disgrace. The plain state of the case was, that a British ambassador had acquired these articles by bribery; and now the British parliament wished to return this bribe, and retain the plunder. He therefore proposed an amendment, ***“that this committee do find that a British ambassador had acquired possession of certain remains of antiquity belonging to the Turkish government; that the committee regretted that in his character as ambassador he did not forbear to make such an acquisition; that the committee impute no venal motive on Lord Elgin, but believe him to have been actuated with a desire to improve the arts in this country. The committee, therefore, in consideration of the expense he has incurred, offer 25,000l to Lord Elgin, in order that these relics of ancient art may be restored to the Turkish government, or preserved by the English government as a sacred trust to the people of Athens, to be restored to them whenever they shall hereafter be demanded.”*** [Emphasis added to amendment]